

*Shiur L'Yom Shishi*¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Shoftim:*** **Deuteronomy 20:1 - 21:9**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 52:3-12**
 B'rit Chadasha: **John 1:26-27**

Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies.

[Deuteronomy 20:3]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 94:23;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is *the 2nd Petition, Teshuvah* [The Prayer of Repentance]

Ki teitze l'milchamah al-oyveicha – When you go out to milchamah with your enemies ...
v'ra'ita sus v'rechev am rav mimeicha – and you see horses and chariots, and a people
more powerful and numerous than you ... *lo tirah* – be not afraid **Deuteronomy 20:1a.**

Moshe's 2nd discourse on the plains of Moav [Dt. chapters 5-28] constitutes his "I Have a Dream" speech. What kind of people and nation is destined to come forth from Avraham's seed? What kind of impact is that people/nation to have upon the world? Moshe has seen a vision. Moshe has dreamt a dream.

What is this Dream Moshe has Dreamt?

Moshe's dream is not about the imposition of a legal code; it is a prophetic whisper of hope for mankind. He does not envision some utopia springing forth out of innate human 'goodness', suddenly arising out man's hallowed institutions of education, political theory, science, medicine, or religion. Moshe's dream is a involves very real adversity being discerned, strategically engaged, and patiently overcome; very real temptations being seen for exactly what they are and joyfully resisted; of very dark forms and faces of evil being faced, unmasked, and soundly defeated; and powerful releases of redemption and restoration being offered to every broken soul, household, bloodline, community, nation, and continent on earth. The stunning dream that Moshe has dreamt is light years more ambitious, beautiful, and inspiring than any philosopher's utopian fantasy could ever hope to be. Be forewarned, however - the dream that Moshe has dreamt and is inviting us to dream with him necessarily includes recurring times/seasons of war. Not war for the sake of conquest, or vengeance, or profit, of course. Heaven forbid! But war – and long, unpleasant seasons of it – nevertheless. What kind of war? War for the sake of redemption, restoration, healing, and for the laying of a strong foundation for every household to have a legitimate shot at *bayit shalom*. To everything there is a season – and war is no exception. See **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.**

¹ All rights with respect to this publication are reserved to the author, William G. Bullock, Sr., also known as 'the Rabbi's son'. Reproduction of material from any *Rabbi's son* lesson without written permission from the author is prohibited. Copyright © 2025, William G. Bullock, Sr.

War is inevitable. Enemies of the Holy One crouch at our doorstep, plotting to drive us into the sea. They are plotting heinous crimes against us, against our land, and against our covenant relationship with the Holy One – crimes that will result in widespread loss of human life, destruction of property, and a great pall of sadness. How I wish it were not so – but it is. All is not right with humankind. Since the trial of Eden, there seems to be a great darkness in men’s soul. We are supposed to represent light – but the darkness hates the light, and rages against it. The rage is very real – and ever-present. There are lulls in the action, of course; but there is never a complete cessation of hostilities. The table the Holy One – our Good Shepherd – sets for us is *in the presence of our enemies*, and in the *valley of the shadow of death*. Our lot is thus one of constant danger. We must build the Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society Moshe describes in his Great Deuteronomic ‘*Come Up Here and See What I See*’ Discourse the way Nehemiah had the Hebrew people rebuild the wall of Jerusalem – with our building tools in one hand and our weapons of self-defense in the other. See **Nehemiah 4:7-17**. We have to be alert, vigilant, and on our guard at all times – yet not allow ourselves to become either paranoid, bitter, or vengeful. We must make sure our children and children know [a] exactly what kind and level of darkness they are up against, [b] how to deflect, de-escalate, and only when necessary defend and defeat a stronger, outraged adversary; and [c] how to clean up the debris, and start the whole process of light-bearing all over in the aftermath of every battle. Over and over again we will have to deal with bullies, brawlers, inciters, zealots, and despots. We will have to face, withstand, and overcome saber-rattling intimidation, arrogant threats, propaganda campaigns, invasion, and confrontations. There will be attacks. There will be battles. There will be bloodshed. We will suffer casualties. We will weep over collateral damage. We will attend funerals. We will care for widows, for orphans, for the lame of body, and for the broken of spirit. The key – in times of war as in times of peace - is to trust the Holy One, *rest in His Covenant Promises*, abide in His Presence, and *follow His Instructions*. And no matter what happens, or how any given battle goes, we must never, ever, under any circumstances, for even a moment, stop emitting light.

How Many Times Must the Cannonballs Fly?

The Hebrew word that English Bibles translate as ‘war’ is *milchamah*. But *mah milchamah* – *i.e.* what is *milchamah*? What does ‘*milchamah*’ look like and consist of? It is a hard concept to define. The English rendering of ‘war’ conjures up an image of a violent and prolonged conflict, especially between cultures and/or nations. But what lies at the root of it? *Why* is there conflict? How did it start? What makes it escalate? To what end – and with what object – do human beings

individually, and nations or cultures collectively, choose to engage in conflicts of that magnitude?

Milchamah explains the essence of ‘war’ by starting at its root, instead of just focusing on mechanics. *Milchamah* is a noun derived from the verb root *lacham*, meaning *to see as food, harvest as food, and ingest/consume*. As Yehoshua and Kalev said of the Kena’ani enemies – and the giant sons of Anak – that stood between Israel and the land of the patriarchs: ‘... *They are bread* [Hebrew *lechem*] *for us!* Numbers 14:9. That is the essence of *milchamah*. It is about appetite, desire, and drive. Picture *Chava* – *i.e.* ‘Eve’ - in the Garden of Eden. See her standing at the base of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the fateful day known to Christian theologians as ‘the Fall’. Chava had surely seen and walked past that tree many times. But today was different. Today, after engaging in a little conversation with the wily creature Adam had called the Serpent, Chava suddenly looked at the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and saw it in a light she had never seen it before. She let her *pseudo-intellect* - *i.e.* the twisted stronghold of deceptive capacity for ‘illogical logic’ that the Serpent had subtly and subliminal awakened in her – cause her to look at the fruit the Holy One had declared ‘unfood’ for humans through *Serpentine eyes*. She suddenly saw that which was not intended for her at all as ‘*good for food*’, ‘*pleasant to look at*’, and ‘*desirable to make one wise*’. Genesis 3:6. She suddenly saw the fruit through the lens of selfish motives – not for what the Holy One intended for it, but for what she could *use it for* or *get out of it* for her and her husband. Instead of seeing the fruit of the tree of knowledge as something to ‘tend’ and ‘keep’ for the Holy One, as the humble, respectful, God- and man-honoring steward, life-giver, nurturer, and helpmeet that He had created, called, and empowered her to be, she began to look at things through the narcissistic eyes of self-interest, self-promotion, and self-determination. That little slip was all it took. She yielded to her urges, and believed the clever delusions that flowed from her pseudo-intellect – and she set a very dark, very sinister process in motion. Once Chava, under the power of Serpentine suggestion, let herself think about the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as merely a disposable object for her pleasure, it was only a matter of time until she ‘took’ it in hand, plucked it from its assigned purpose and ecosystem, and bit into it.

You should now be getting the essence of what ‘war’ is all about – how it starts, and what happens to those who engage in it. What does it mean to make war on someone else (or have someone make war on you)? It begins with someone following the Serpentine suggestion relative to *another person, group, nation, and/or his/its resource* – *choosing to see that person, group, nation, etc. through self-serving, self-willed, pseudo-intellectually dehumanizing eyes*. It starts with

someone letting Serpent convince him or her that *the other person, group, nation and/or his/its resources is merely an inanimate object – a ‘thing’ to acquire, to assume the right of control over, and to consume/use up/destroy as one sees fit* - rather than as a legitimate, God-created life-force/ecosystem blueprint for which the Holy One has a far different, and far greater, purpose and plan. Narcissism starts the process in motion, but it does not ever end there. The next step of he would *lacham* [*i.e.* make *milchamah*] is to *approach/attack the person, group, or nation in order to assert control over him/it/them*. Whatever force is necessary to take possession/control over the person/group/nation is then asserted – and justified by expediency. And, in the end, the person, group, or nation that ends up on the wrong end of the application of force gets *chewed up, broken into pieces, swallowed, digested, and expelled as human waste*.

Welcome to the challenge of *milchamah*. This is a critical *part of the challenge of living in a fallen world*. We could pretend it does not, or scream that it should not, exist – but it does. Every human bloodline – indeed, every human life – is touched by it. The question is not whether we, our children, and our children’s children will engage or be engaged in, or be affected by, war; the question is, when *milchamah* come - calling as it inevitably will - how will we, our children, and our children’s children think, speak, react, and behave differently in the face of it than the pagans, who know not the Holy One, do not walk in His Ways, and have no concept of His Grand Plan for the redemption of mankind, bloodline by bloodline, and for the restoration of all Creation to its intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, *shalom*, and harmonious interaction?

What Does Milchamah Have To Do With the Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society We Are Called to Build?

Moshe’s second discourse on the plain has brought us to another critical crossroads. Lift up your eyes with the prophet – and look at the future of humanity. No matter what pathway you look down – whether it be the narrow road of the Bridegroom-King, or the broad path of the runaway bride - there is one kind of landmark both pathways have in common. That common landmark is *the battlefield* – *i.e.* the place *where wars are waged*. As Messiah said to kick off his great Olivet Discourse: ***For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*** Matthew 24:7a.

What is war? It occurs when one man or group of men follows the great Serpentine suggestion, and chooses to see other humans not as brothers and sisters created in the image of the Holy One, but as inhuman objects to use, possess, and consume. It starts with thoughts. Then come negative emotions – bias, prejudice, disgust, disdain, etc. Then comes a change in demeanor – and negative body language.

Then tirades of derogatory speech pour forth: innuendo, gossip, slander, exaggerated, sensationalized accusations, dehumanizing labels, judgmental condemnations, and finally, vile threats. Before anyone realizes what is happening, in-your-face slogans are being chanted, property of the dehumanized group begins to be targeted - first for defacement, then for destruction. Fires are set. Windows are smashed. Houses and buildings are looted. Meanwhile, acts of physical violence against the ‘despised ones’ – who are considered nothing more than a *scourge on society* – increase in both frequency and bloodiness. Brainwashed young men and women who fancy themselves as soldiers of ‘the cause’ are called forth by fearmongering and hate-inciting demagogues to rid the world of the ‘deplorables’. These brainwashed fools run into the points of contact, take aim at the most vulnerable pressure points of the Divinely designed physical bodies of those they have chosen to see as ‘evil’, rush at them with fire in their eyes and hate in their hearts, and set upon them with intent to inflict as much injury, misery, and bloody death as they can. Welcome to the *killing field* – the place where human beings turn back into animals, such that combatants and innocents alike are forced to stare into the face of death ... and *worse*.

This is not by any means pleasant stretch of either of the roads Moshe is describing for us. But alas, inevitably all men – including us and our children - will have to learn to deal with it sooner or later. The key is not just to survive the debacle, but to actually [a] learn from it and [b] become better, wiser, gentler, and more peaceful men because of it. As the Prince of Peace said: ***When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled*** (*do not lose your sense of shalom, joy, hope, and emunah*), ***for such things must take place. But this is not how it ends.*** Matthew 24:6. Even in times of war, you see, the Holy One is always working things together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His Purpose. Romans 8:28. So, Dear Ones ... do you – or do you not - *trust Him*?

***But ... Why Can't We All Just Get Along
and Sing 'Kum bah Yah' or 'Imagine' Together Around a Campfire?***

Part of being in Covenant with the Creator of the Universe is learning to passionately desire, deliberately choose, joyfully embrace, constantly walk in, and beautifully model, *shalom*. But what kind of *shalom* are we talking about? *What kind of shalom is COVENANT SHALOM?* Not the *shalom* this world dreams of, of course. This world's idea of ‘peace’ – *i.e.* absence of any conflict, adversity, or need for Divine Intervention - is, after all, just a silly, sensual, sentimental, self-indulgent pipe dream. It is just another form of ‘Tower of Babel’ rebellion against the Holy One's Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species and for the Restoration of Creation to its intended Edenic State of Beauty, Fruitfulness, and Shalom.

In this age, you see, there is no stopping it. Nations are going to get full of themselves and rise up against nations, and ethnic groups are going to get worked into a frenzy of ethnic-arrogance by race-baiters, and be talked into take weapons in hand and sally forth to *subjugate*, perhaps even *annihilate*, other ethnic groups by whom they feel threatened. It is *just part of the mot tamut – i.e. death and dying, surely death and dying’ - sequelae that started with Adam and Chava ingesting the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. As partners in the Covenant, our assignment is to find, embrace, live in, and share a much higher, very real, situation-transcending form of *shalom* – the *shalom* of our Creator and Covenant Partner Himself. As the Master said: ***Shalom I am leaving with you. My shalom I am giving to you. I am not giving you the kind of peace the world gives.*** [I am empowering you] ***to never have your heart troubled, and never to be afraid.*** John 14:27. Finding, embracing, surrendering to, and then carefully guarding that radically empowered Divine gift *shalom* – which is literally HIS own personal, eternal, unshakable attribute of *peace* - is step one. The work of this Divine *shalom-infilling* has to begin internally, of course. We must learn to resist all fleshly reactions, to let insults, provocations, and persecution roll off of us like water, and to stay calm – and trust our God instead of our own strength - in the midst of every kind of personal trauma, interpersonal drama, social injustice, and environmental calamity. We must learn to hold tenaciously to *the shalom of our King* even through holocaust, and to never forsake that *shalom* for *this world’s counterfeit* – an illusory sense of well-being that wraps itself in dreams of health, leisure, pleasure, convenience, normalcy, advancement, promotion, prosperity, conquest, favor with men, and that dangerous lie that the occult masters of this world describe as ‘good fortune’.

But even though the *extreme level of shalom* to which we are called must begin internally, it should, of course, by no means stop there. If it is real, it will manifest itself in real-time, atmosphere-shifting, *tikkun*-advancing behaviors. As Shaul of Tarsus described the process: ***Repay no man evil for evil. Show respect to the good things you see in every man. To the extent it is possible, as much as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all men.*** Romans 12:17-18. Be mindful of what Sh’lomo said in Proverbs: ***When a man’s ways please the Holy One, He makes even his enemies be at shalom with him.*** Proverbs 16:7. But also remember that, as Sh’lomo also advised under the pen name *Kohelet*: There is, nevertheless, going to be ***et-milchamah*** – *i.e. a time for war.* Ecclesiastes 3:8.

Oh, there will not be a time of war because we seek to be the world’s policemen, or because we feel morally superior to other nations and decide to impose our will on them, or because we want anything they have, or even because in our opinion

are evil and deserve to be punished for wrongdoing. We are put here on earth by our Creator to bless men, families, and regions, not to harm them. We are here to usher in the sweet scent of *teshuvah* through inspiring acts of wisdom, kindness, mercy, and forgiveness - never through self-righteous moral outrage or pursuant to a crusading vigilante's sense of 'justice'. Our inner *shalom* –the *shalom* our Beloved King has shared with us – means we will have no desire to conquer the world – or any part of it – militarily. Nor will we have any aspiration to inflict our will or ways on the nations by force. For these reasons, we will always go to great lengths to avoid war – or any use of force - to the greatest extent possible. And when it is not possible to avoid the use of force, we will always choose the least amount of force necessary to accomplish our King's objective, forsaking anger, wrath, retribution, or vengeance.

Alas, with our neighbors – and those who hate our God – it is a different story. They do not have the Holy One's *shalom*. They, therefore, do not know true or meaningful peace. They do not know what love is, what forgiveness is, what mercy is, or that all things work together for good for those who love the Holy One, who are called according to His purpose. They pour over data, obsess over information, and go to any lengths to chase after the occult nonsense they falsely label 'knowledge' – but they have no concept whatever of wisdom [*i.e.* the Torah] and no experience of understanding [*i.e.* the pathway of light cast by the shining countenance of the Holy One]. So, in frustration, they react to our presence in the world with predictable – even 'natural' – angst, outrage, and violence. They fixate on us, and how we are different from them. They dream up vain imaginations about us – blood libels, conspiracy theories, and paranoid delusions. They teach their children to hate us – and that their highest calling in life is to wipe us off the map. And that, Dear Reader, is why, try as we might, we cannot always avoid war.

Dealing with Conflict – Even War – But Keeping our Shalom, And Never Giving in to Fear

Moshe's question is thus not whether there will be war. A true prophet sees war as inevitable - a fact of life for all people, whether they are of the Covenant or outside it. Moshe's question is, when war is foisted upon us, as it inevitably will be, how will we choose to wage it? It is pretty obvious that, since the Holy One has made it clear that we are not to emulate the nations in any regard, He does not want us to wage war the way the other nations of the world do either. What, then, will be our rules of engagement? What will be our strategic objectives? What will be our tactics? What will be the key to our *morale* and *esprit de corps*? What will mark us as 'different' than our enemies. What will be the 'more excellent way' our Bridegroom-King prescribes for us?

As Psalm 27, from which we always take our meditations in the month of Elul, says:

*The Holy One is ohri [i.e. my 'light'] and yishi'i [i.e. my yeshua/helper/deliverer];
whom shall I fear? The Holy One is the stronghold of my life;*

of whom shall I be afraid?

*When the wicked come against me to consume my flesh – my enemies and foes –
they stumble; they fall.*

*Though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear.
Though war rises against me, even in that I will be confident.*

*...
for in the time of trouble, He will hide me in His pavilion –
in the secret place of His tabernacle He will hide me.*

*He will set me high upon a rock
and my head will be lifted up above my enemies.*

[Psalm 27:1-3, 5-6]

Get Ready – War is Coming Soon To a Theater Near You!

Moshe begins this critical part of the discourse with these words: ***Ki-teitze l'milchamah al-oyveicha*** - when you go forth to wage warfare against your enemies ... ***v'ra'ita sus varechev am rav mimeicha*** – and you see horses, and chariots, and greater/larger enemy forces than you have ... ***lo tirah*** – do not be afraid. **Deuteronomy 20:1.** Surely Moshe has made some kind of mistake! Enemies? Horses? Chariots? Armies? Warfare? Terror? Coming against Us? But why? We seek no one's harm. We hate no one. We threaten no one's cities, farms, waterways, women, children, oil, grain, or wealth. Who on earth would want to harm US? Well, just ask anyone who lived in Israel in May of 1948, or in June of 1967, or in October of 1973, or during any of the Intifadas and Jihadist Terror Campaigns since - how that works out for us! Ask the Jewish residents of Sederot, and Hebron, or Jerusalem. Sometimes, no matter how hard we try to avoid it, the enemy attacks anyway. And when that happens, we must not be afraid to do what we have to do to prevail. We should not be vindictive. We should not resort to their level of barbarity. We should be as surgically precise as possible in our response to their attacks, doing all within our power to minimize human suffering and civilian casualties. But as long as they continue to threaten, conspire against, and attack us, our wives, and our children, we must trust the Holy One, stand strong and united, and do everything necessary to make sure their plans to drive us into the Sea, or bomb us into oblivion, and thereby rid the world of its light and salt, do not succeed.

Welcome to the Season of Wars and Rumors of Wars

The *Kohelet*² [the ‘preacher’ of the book commonly known as ‘Ecclesiastes’] tells us that *to everything there is a season – and a time for every purpose under heaven*. Ecclesiastes 3:1. That means that there is, among other things, *a time for war*. The Master said it thusly: **“*There will be wars, and [there will be] rumors of wars ... nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*”** Moreover, in His ‘kingdom of Heaven’ parables did you notice how Yeshua taught that when the King/Master of the parables returned He would ‘*cut to pieces*’ those He judged to be His enemies? See **Matthew 24:51** and **Luke 12:46**. That sounds pretty violent to me. And the Book of Revelation paints an even more graphic picture of the warfare that will be waged by Yeshua *and all the Saints* in concert with Him at the end of days. See Revelation 19:11-21 for the full details, and note specifically how the writer of Revelation tells us in no uncertain terms of Messiah **“*With tzedek [justice] He judges AND MAKES WAR!*”** Yeshua understood, you see, that war was – and would continue despite His death, burial and resurrection, to be – an integral part not only of the human experience but also of the Holy One’s plan of redemption for mankind and Creation.

War, in and of itself, is *not evil*. Evil just likes to come along for the ride. Evil *targets civilians*. Evil demonizes the opposition. Evil plays on ancient, dormant threads of racial and ethnic and religious and personal hatred. Evil *makes war – even while screaming about making peace – for selfish and/or perversely misguided purposes*. The good news is that even when this happens, and evil is unleashed upon the world with a vengeance as an incident to war, the Holy One is in control of history, and is fully capable of healing and restoring the war torn and war-ravaged areas and peoples and bringing forth good even from the ashes of carnage. We do trust Him to do that, don’t we? We are people who believe in both His Goodness and His amazing powers of redemption and restoration, aren’t we?

For the Holy One’s covenant people, the reality is, *there will be war*. For nations – and for people - sometimes standing one’s ground and engaging an intruder/aggressor in a confrontation is actually *the lesser of evils*.

But What About ‘Turning the Other Cheek’?

In the cruel, dangerous, exceedingly violent days of the Roman army’s occupation of *Eretz Yisrael*, the Rabbi of the Era of Occupation famously taught His disciples: ***I admonish you not to resist*** [react with in-kind reciprocation toward] ***an evil person*** [Heb. *rasha* – a self-obsessed, out of control, narcissist]. ***But whoever***

² *Kohelet* is the Hebrew word translated into English as ‘the Preacher’ in the book of Ecclesiastes. It refers to its author, Shlomo [Solomon].

slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Matthew 5:39-41. But these teachings in the Sermon on the Mount are about *remaining calm in the face of opposition and overcoming the fleshly urge for personal vengeance when insulted or unfairly treated* – not about necessary self-defense, defense of family, or defense of home, nation, Covenant culture, or Divinely-entrusted homeland. They are all about the Torah’s instructions about ‘eye for eye’ and ‘tooth per tooth’ – which were to be the province solely of the duly appointed and functioning *Sanhedrin* [*i.e.* the operative *legal system*]; never, according to Torah, were the wronged individuals themselves, or some angry mob of self-appointed vigilantes, ever to take the law into their own hands and execute their emotion-polluted view of ‘righteous vengeance’. The Master’s admonitions had absolutely nothing to do with, and did not in any way encourage, either *anti-war sentiment in general* or the conscientious objector type of abstract *pacifism* we see in today’s world.

Wait a minute, you say. If what Yeshua said about ‘turning the other cheek’ and ‘going the extra mile’, etc. was not intended as an endorsement of the *ideology of pacifism* [*i.e.* being against all wars, and never being willing to confront encroaching evil], what then were those teachings about? I’ll tell you, if you are willing to *sh’ma*. Those instructions were aimed solely at having the people of the Holy One – who have a priestly responsibility under the Covenant - *submit to the timing and the judgment of our Covenant Partner in Heaven*. What Yeshua was talking about was staying calm and behaving wisely in response to insults and provocations. He was not in any way suggesting we should disavow self-defense, much less defense of others, when life, limb, or the survival of the Covenant nation was at stake.

When it is not in the timing of the Holy One yet time for judgment, to do anything other than turn the other cheek is to *lo sh’ma* [not listen to and heed] the Holy One. On the other hand, to turn the other cheek *when the Holy One decrees it to be a time of war* – well, that is also to *lo sh’ma* [not listen to, heed, and begin to flow in rhythm with] the Holy One. War is sometimes not only the most necessary, but also the most just, response to aggression by rogue nations and intractable organizations which have allowed themselves to be so hard of heart toward the Holy One and His People that they are ideology committed to, and refuse to walk away from, the perverse cocktail of terror, torture, rape, gore, atrocity, mayhem, pillaging, and genocide. So, no, war is not the problem. But there IS a problem that all too often leads to wars. The problem that I am talking about is the tendency of fallen human flesh to react to provocations and perceived insults with *raw emotion*, with *shortsighted self-interest*, with the

*faulty tools of human understanding, and with the venomous bite of political or ideological polemic. Failing to discern the times, the seasons, or **sh'ma** the voice of the Holy One, or acknowledge His chosen vessels of discipline and/or judgment as being just that – that is the root of the problem of war.*

Understanding the Times and the Seasons

If we accept *Kohelet's* declaration that there is yet remaining *a time for war* for those of us in the Kingdom of Heaven, several critical questions come to mind:

1. How will we know *when the time for confrontation/war* is upon us?
2. *Who will be our enemies*, and what will be their motivations and tactics?
3. *Who will stand/fight alongside us*, and *who will be offended*?
4. Who will be our commander(s), what weapons will we be called upon to wield, what communication techniques will we be called upon to utilize, and what objectives will we be called upon to achieve through what strategies.

Is war/confrontation only to be for us only a 'last resort' in the event 'diplomacy' [however a society defines that word] fails? Is war/confrontation only to be engaged in 'defensively', or is it sometimes the Holy One's plan for us to engage in 'pre-emptive strikes'? Ah Dear Reader, that is where the **sh'ma** lifestyle we have been talking about comes in.

War for us must not be merely a fleshly *reaction to provocation*. War for us must not be a *response to either the shouts of the hawks or the whimpers of the doves in our midst*. What we must do is to **sh'ma** the Voice of our Shepherd, and **lo sh'ma** every other voice. We must stay 'tuned in' to the Divine Command Center. We must move only upon HIS command. All we do, we must do only '**at His Word.**' Hence, since we are talking in parsha **Shoftim** about government, we rightfully expect the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov to have instructions for us on how we are to act when the time for war comes. He does not disappoint us. Here is how Moshe instructs us to prepare for war:

Ki-teitze l'milchamah al-oyveicha

When you go forth to battle against your enemies,

V'ra'ita sus v'richev

and see horses, and chariots,

am rav mimeicha lo tira meihem

[and] a people more than you, you are not to be afraid of them;

ki-Adonai Eloheicha imach

for the Holy One your God is with you,

ha-ma'al'cha me'eretz Mitzrayim
who brought you up out of the land of Mitzrayim.
[Deuteronomy 20:1]

Did you ever notice how frequently the Holy One and His prophets tell us *not to be afraid* [Hebrew, *al tirah/lo tira*]? Here it is again. Our Covenant Partner in Heaven understands the human being. He understands the psychological and emotional issues human beings face. He understands that the thought of a battle to the death – especially against a physically stronger foe – is daunting to the human psyche. And so He speaks over us – not as a command, but as *a prophetic empowerment* – saying ‘you **are not to fear** ...’

Be **empowered**, Beloved! Receive the precious gift of Divine courage from your Creator and King – He Who ‘*with tzedek judges ... AND MAKES WAR*’.

Preparation For War/Confrontation - When It Comes Our Way

By the time he spoke the words we will read today, Moshe has seen many, many sides of war. His experience with war began when he was a young prince in Egypt, where he saw first-hand what a mighty army could accomplish. See **Exodus, chapters 1-2**. Many years later Moshe saw the other side of war at the Sea of Reeds, where just prior to the Holy One’s dramatic intervention, he and his rag-tag mob of untrained refugees had to look into the teeth of a terrifying charge of Pharaoh’s charioteers. **Exodus 14:9**. Then, before the Redeemed Community even got to Sinai, Moshe saw war twice more. First, the Holy One’s people were blindsided by Amaleki terrorists at Refidim. **Exodus 17:8**. Shortly thereafter, Moshe, Aharon, and Chur presided over a full-blown battle with the main Amaleki nation. **Exodus 17:9-13**.

Moshe has also seen the horrors of ‘civil war’ at Sinai, in the aftermath of the ***chet egel*** [calf sin]. **Exodus 32:27-29**. Moshe has also seen the ‘presumptuous ones’ launch a disastrous offensive against the Emori just North of *K’desh Barnea* - and had seen them taste the bitter pill of ignominious defeat as a consequence. **Numbers 14:40-45**. More recently, Moshe has seen a new generation arise, had seen it attacked by the armies of both Sichon and Og, and had, in each case, seen the Holy One miraculously deliver the attackers into Israel’s hands for destruction. **Numbers 21:23-26, and 33-35**. And Moshe also has, just a few weeks prior to delivering this message, seen an entire people group – the Midyani, with whom he had once lived – decimated in connection with a war. **Numbers 31:1-18**.

Moshe knows that war was not a walk in the park. He knew that, even though it is our Covenant Partner in Heaven who determines the outcome of wars, it is ordinary men whose bodies must endure the shot and the steel, and who lose

limbs and whose lives are endangered. He also knew that the time of war was not a time to be ‘soft’ or forgiving or compassionate. He knew war was about killing, and doing it before the other guy – or his relatives – could kill you or your relatives. And so Moshe teaches the people of the Holy One not only that there is a time for war, but *how they are to prepare for it when it approaches*. Here are his instructions:

V’hayah k’oravchem el-ha-milchamah

It shall be, when you draw near to the battle,

v’nigash ha-ohen v’iber el-ha-am

that the Kohen shall approach and speak to the people,

V’amar aleihem sh’ma Yisra’el

and shall tell them “Sh’ma, Yisra’el,

atem krevim hayom l’milchamah al-oyveichem

draw near this day to battle against your enemies:

al-yerach levavchem

don't let your heart faint;

al-tir'u v'al-tachpeizu v'al-ta'artzu mipneihem

don't be afraid, nor tremble, neither be scared of them;

Ki Adonai Eloheichem haholech imachem

for the Holy One your God is He Who goes with you,

L'hilachem lachem im-oyveichem l'hoshia etchem

to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

[Deuteronomy 20:1-4]

After this general exhortation to all the people, we are told that the leaders of the army are to ask four questions of every man of fighting age, to determine who will be chosen to fight [selective service], and who will be exempt. Here is the way it is recorded for us in Torah:

The officers are to speak to the people, saying,

‘What man is there who has built a new house, and has not dedicated it?

let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.

What man is there who has planted a vineyard, and has not used the fruit of it?

let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man use the fruit of it.

What man is there who has pledged to be married to a wife, and has not taken her?

let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.

The officers are to speak further to the people, and they are to say,

What man is there who is fearful and faint-hearted?

let him go and return to his house lest his brother's heart melt as his heart.

Then, when the officers have made an end of speaking to the people,

that they are to appoint captains of hosts at the head of the people.

[Deuteronomy 20:5-9]

And the Holy One's instructions do not end with preparation for battle. He tells us precisely HOW WE ARE TO WAGE WAR:

*When you draw near to a city to fight against it, proclaim **shalom** to it.
Then, if it makes you an answer of shalom, and opens to you,
then all the people who are found therein are to become tributary to you, and serve you.*

*If it makes no treaty of shalom with you, but makes war against you, then besiege it:
and when the Holy One your God delivers it into your hand,
strike every male of it with the edge of the sword:
but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle,
and all that is in the city, even all the spoil of it,
take them for a prey to yourself;
and you shall eat the spoil of your enemies which the Holy One your God has given you.
Thus shall you do to all the cities which are very far off from you,
which are not of the cities of these nations.*

[Deuteronomy 20:10-15]

*When you shall besiege a city a long time in making war against it to take it,
you shall not destroy the trees of it by wielding an axe against them;
for you may eat of them, and you shall not cut them down;
for is the tree of the field man, that it should be besieged of you?
Only the trees of which you know that they are not trees for food,
you shall destroy and cut them down;
and build bulwarks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.*

[Deuteronomy 20:19-20]

As you can tell from reading the above *we are not to wage war the way the world does*. We are not to rely upon superior armaments, or superior training, or superior military strategies. We are not to wage war half-heartedly, worried about what the wagging tongues of other nations – or the fainthearted among us – will say. We are to look to your Covenant Partner in Heaven, and listen to His instructions, and do what He says to do - and then do *nothing less*, and *nothing more*. The victory is ours *when – and only when - the battle is the Holy One's*.

In Conclusion – Wrapping Up of Our Studies in Shoftim

Throughout the parsha of Responsible Kingdom Administration Moshe has been challenging us regarding the type of communities we will build. Moshe has been explaining to us how the Holy One redeemed us from bondage not for our sakes, but for the sake of a Grand Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation that He developed before the foundation of the world. The Creator's Plan is for us to interact positively with not only Creation but with the other human beings He has created. That is why He stepped out of eternity into time and cut covenant with Avraham – and with us. If, as, when, and to the extent we incorporate the brilliant instructions for living He has given us into the *sh'ma* lifestyle Moshe has taught us, the Holy One knows our presence in any community will make it a much

better, healthier, more fruitful place. The result is supposed to be a *Kingdom-of-Heaven scented society*.

Moshe has every expectation that in the course of walking out the *mitzvot* of Torah – not for reward or out of fear of punishment for disobedience, but out of genuine love for our Redeemer - we will each individually be empowered to live rich, full, meaningful lives – lives of significant influence and impact. The prophet in him knows that, if, as, and to the extent we stay in constant communication with, and remain responsive, to the Holy One, the life choices we make, the wise words of *shalom* we speak, and the powerful deeds of kindness we perform, will provide a model for the world to follow. The *mitzvot* of Torah are our ticket to establish a standard of ‘*on earth as it is in Heaven*’ to which all men of all nations can aspire. The Beautiful Protocols of Wisdom and Compassion in which the Holy One has ordained for us to walk are breathtaking in their simplicity, but they are stunning in their brilliance. They constitute a masterfully choreographed lover’s waltz. Each choreographed dance step is designed to show off our Bridegroom-King’s attributes of mercy, longsuffering, forgiveness, and kindness. As we participate in the dance, the King clothes us with His glory, and covers us with a righteousness that everyone should recognize is of *His engineering and construction*, not any man’s.

As a result of the masterpieces of choreography He has provided for us, the Holy One expects us to *do life* on earth *really, really well*. Not *perfectly*, of course – but *really, really well*. And in those occasional circumstances where we, for whatever reason, do not do it really, really well He expects us to *do something about it* besides walking away in a huff leaving bloody daggers, broken relationships, and piles of debris strewn on the ground along the path as we make our exit. He does not want unpleasant situations to end in away in bleeding wounds, in unresolved offenses, in self-righteous pride, in self-justifying anger – much less things like retaliation, escalation, hate, fear, or shame. He does not want us to focus on interpersonal drama – much less feed on it. He looks at every train wreck of human interaction and says to His People: ‘*what do you see*’? If we say we all we see is *tohu v’vohu* [*i.e.* without form and void - like Creation was before the Holy One moved upon the Deep and called forth Light from within it] the Holy One says: “*Come on now, my children - look again!!!*”

The Holy One is instilling in us the vision - and the heart - of a passionate Kinsman-Redeemer. He is training us up to be a people who will, instead of viewing the problem areas of the world through our myopic eyes of fallen flesh like the rest of humanity does, look at those problems *through the lens of hope the way He does*. Our King wants to instill in us a confidence that in the midst of

every disaster that this world can present He is always going to be present and working diligently to make sure there is a narrow pathway that, when sought, uncovered, and followed, will lead anyone who wants to go with Him to healing and restoration. He wants us to see beyond the blood, guts and debris fallen humanity has left on the battlegrounds of our day. He wants us to let Him empower us to be transcendents and overcomers – a dauntless people who see their mission in life as to lead everyone who will follow out of the rubble and into healing and restoration. He does not want the ultimate issues in our less-than-optimum interactions to ever be *who started it, who was right, who got the last word, who had the best argument* – much less who ‘won’ and who ‘lost’. He wants us to know that in His Kingdom those issues just do not matter – because they are all *focused exclusively on the past*, which no one can do anything about. He wants the focus to be on *where we go from here*. He is always wanting to heal the wounded souls of the survivors. And He is training us to always focus on how we can ‘fix’ – or at least bring some good out of - the mess we and others in the world have made.

The Foundational Issue of Inter-Personal Interaction – ‘Tzedek, Tzedek, You are to Pursue!’

The bedrock foundation of all human interaction is to be the Hebrew virtue of *tzedek*. This Hebrew noun is often translated into English as “**JUSTICE**”. *Tzedek* is to be more than our ideal or goal – it is to be our *lifestyle*. But *what does a Lifestyle of tzedek* look like? Through the prophets the Holy One defines the lifestyle of *tzedek* for us. Through Yeshayahu [Isaiah] He taught us the basic elements were: “**learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; vindicate the fatherless, plead the widow's cause**” Isaiah 1:17. Through *ha-navi* Zecharyah [Zechariah] He fine-tuned the *Tzedek* lifestyle definition, saying it means to: “**Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and devise no evil against another in your heart.**” “**These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true, and make for peace.**” Zechariah 7:9-10; 8:6. Through *ha-navi* Micah the Holy One phrased it as follows: “**what does the Holy One require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**” Micah 6:8. Yeshua summed all this up for us in the Sermon on the Mount by saying: “**Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Torah and the Prophets.**” Matthew 7:12.

Does not wisdom *cry out*? Does not understanding *raise her voice*? On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she *takes her stand*. Beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she *cries aloud*. *Tzedek* is not really

all that complicated. It is the opposite of *tzedek* that burdens the intellect, confuses the heart, and pollutes both the soul and the land.

The Way of Tzedek

What is being described in parsha *Shoftim* is not a system that has ever been put into full effect anywhere on the face of the earth. Neither Y'hoshua, nor the judges of Yisrael, nor the kings of either Yisrael or Y'hudah instituted this system in its fullness. So why does Moshe spend so much time laying out its principles and essentials? Ah Beloved, might it be because what Moshe is really talking about is *the form and nature of government that we will one day experience in the Messianic Kingdom?* Is not what Moshe is describing the governmental system that will be instituted by Messiah Himself, when He rules the nations with a rod of iron, and *'judges and makes war'*?

I sincerely hope that the reading and discussion of these principles of Divine Government this week has been as *humbling* an experience for you as it has been for me. Beloved, I literally tremble at the idea of government done HIS WAY instead of man's way. I literally experience the beginning throes of travail as my spiritual eyes are opened through His Words of Life and I am suddenly Divinely empowered to see the folly, the self-promotion, the rampant corruption, and the blatant deception that characterize all forms of government which man has dreamed up.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Who was to be the first to speak to the people of Israel before each battle? What was to be said to the army by this speaker?

2. There were to be four (4) questions asked of the army by the officers before each battle.

[A] What were the four questions?

[B] If someone answered any of the questions affirmatively, what happened to that man?

[C] Why do you think God would give those instructions?

3. What was the first thing the army of God was to do when they approached a city held by an enemy? How is this different from what Yeshua told the twelve in Matthew 10:11-15?

4. Why did the Holy One instruct Israel to utterly exterminate the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites?

5. The final 9 verses of this week's parsha – *i.e.* Deuteronomy 21:1-9 - discuss

what is to happen when someone is found murdered, and the killer is not known.

*If one be found slain lying in the field
in the land which the Holy One your God gives you to possess,
and it isn't known who has struck him;
then your Zakenim and your judges shall come forth,
and they shall measure to the cities which are round about him who is slain:
and it shall be that the city nearest to the slain man,
even the Zakenim of that city shall take a heifer of the herd,
which hasn't been worked with, and which has not drawn in the yoke;
and the Zakenim of that city shall bring down the heifer
to a valley with running water, which is neither plowed nor sown,
and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley.*

*The Kohanim the sons of Levi are to come near;
for them the Holy One your God has chosen to minister to him,
and to bless in the name of the Holy One;
and according to their word is every controversy and every stroke to be.
All the Zakenim of that city, who are nearest to the slain man,
are to wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley;
and they are to answer and say, '**Our hands have not shed this blood,
Forgive, Holy One, your people Yisra'el, whom you have redeemed,
and don't allow innocent blood [to remain] in the midst of your people Yisra'el.'***

*The blood will be forgiven them.
So are you to put away the innocent blood from the midst of you,
when you do that which is right in the eyes of the Holy One.*

[A] How is it determined who will take responsibility for making atonement?

[B] How and by whom is atonement to be made?

[C] Write the prayer that those making atonement were to recite.

6. What function(s) did the Levi'im [Levites] fulfill in the various towns of Israel [i.e. outside Jerusalem]?

7. What was the purpose of the hand washing referred to in Deuteronomy 9:6? Can you think of an incident in the B'rit Chadasha where a leader performed a similar act? Give the book, chapter and verse and explain.

8. Today's concluding haftarah reading for parsha *Shoftim* is from Isaiah 52, and reads as follows:

*Thus says the Holy One:
You were sold for nothing; and you shall be redeemed without money.
For thus says the Holy One your GOD,
**"My people went down at the first into Mitzrayim to sojourn there:
and the Ashur has oppressed them without cause.
Now therefore, what do I here, says the Holy One,
seeing that my people is taken away for nothing?"***

*Those who rule over them do howl, says the Holy One,
and my name continually all day is blasphemed.*

*Therefore my people shall know my name:
therefore [they shall know] in that day that I am he who does speak; behold, it is I.*

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes shalom, who brings good news of good,
who publishes salvation, who says to Tziyon, **Your God reigns!***

*The voice of your watchmen! They lift up the voice, together do they sing;
for they shall see eye to eye when the Holy One returns to Tziyon.*

*Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Y'rushalayim;
for the Holy One has comforted His people; He has redeemed Y'rushalayim.*

[A] Look up the word “sold” in Strong’s Concordance and Gesenius’ Lexicon [Hebrew word #4376]; look how that same word is used in Genesis 37:28. Describe the *Hebraic word picture* you see developing around this verb.

[B] Look up the word our English Bibles translate as “redeemed” [Strong’s Hebrew word #1350] in Strong’s and in Gesenius. Describe the *Hebraic word picture* you see developing around this verb.

[C] Beginning with verse 5 Isaiah prophesies things to be spoken by the *Servant of The Holy One* and by the “watchmen” of Y'rushalayim.

[D] What five things does the prophet say the *Servant of the Holy One* [He whose feet are “*beautiful upon the mountains*”] will proclaim?

[E] What does Isaiah say the “watchmen” will see?

[F] What does Isaiah say the nations of the world will see?

9. The final verses of our haftarah constitute a prophetic call to all the people of the Holy One. There is to be a leaving – a time of *departure* – for all the Holy One’s people, like there was a leaving – a time of *departure* – from Ur of the Chaldees, from Haran, from Egypt, and from Babylon. Leaving – moving on in response to the call of our Covenant Partner in Heaven – is a part of our destiny. The key is knowing *when it is time to leave*. Here is what Yeshayahu says:

*The Holy One has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the eretz have seen the yeshu`ah of our God.*

*Depart! Depart! Go out from there,
touch no unclean thing; go out of the midst of her;
cleanse yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Holy One.
For you shall not go out in haste, neither shall you go by flight:
for the Holy One will go before you; and the God of Yisra'el will be your rear guard.*

[Isaiah 52:10-12]

[A] From where, what, and whom are the Holy One’s people to “depart” and “go out”? [*i.e.* what is the ‘her’ they are to go out of?]

[B] Read II Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1, and Revelation 18:1-8. What do you

think our Covenant Partner in Heaven is calling you to ‘leave’ at this point in your life?

10. In today’s final aliyah from the selected Brit Chadasha reading for parsha *Shoftim* we finally find what we came for.

*Yochanan answered them [further]³: "I immerse in water,
but among you stands One whom you don't know.
He is the one who comes after me, who is preferred before me,
whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to loosen."*

*These things were done in Beit-Anyah beyond the Yarden, where Yochanan was immersing.
[John 1:26-27]*

[A] Yochanan answers further by saying “*I immerse in water*”. Most English Bibles translate this as “*baptize*”. We in modern day America have grown up with a picture in our minds of a baptism occurring when a religious leader dunks someone else, with arms crossed, in a tank of water. But look up the term ‘*mikveh*’ in a Hebraic source, and write a description of what a Hebrew *mikveh* ceremony was like and was all about

[B] *Water*, of course, is an ancient Hebraic metaphor for the *Torah*. See, e.g., Psalm 1, for instance, where the man ‘*whose delight is in the Torah of the Holy One*’ shall be “*like a tree planted by the rivers of living water*”. While physical water [H₂O] was unquestionably involved in what Yochanan was doing, how do we know Yochanan was actually ‘immersing’ people in *Torah* as well as physical water? [Hint: read and meditate on Luke 1:11-17, 2:67-79, Matthew 3:1-15, Luke 3:1-20, and Matthew 11:2-19].

[C] List the three descriptive phrases Yochanan uses concerning the Messiah. What does each mean to you?

*May you know the times and the seasons when war is necessary.
And when you make war, may you do so in accordance with the Torah.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 94:23

*He has brought on them their own iniquity,
and will cut them off in their own wickedness.
The Holy One our God will cut them off.*

³ There is some reason for believing that Yochanan was addressing the remarks we will read today not to the *kohanim* and Levi'im [to whom he had said “*I am a voice crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Holy One.*”], but to the *P'rushim*, who had sent them. This is however not specifically stated, hence it cannot be proven.